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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth-first year

Identical letters dated 27 July 2016 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that conditions in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, are worsening, as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its illegal and provocative practices, including in connection with its settlement activities and collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

In grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, notably articles 49 and 33, Israel persists with its colonization of the Palestinian land, the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian property and the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. The cumulative effect is one of increased humanitarian suffering, frustration and hopelessness, threatening to further destabilize the already perilous situation on the ground.

First, in defiance of world opinion and with blatant contempt for international law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the occupying Power continues to openly persist with its expansion and building of illegal settlements throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, the Palestinian leadership strongly condemns the decision announced this past Monday, 25 July, by Israel, the occupying Power, to advance plans to build 770 more settlement units in the illegal settlement of "Gilo", which has been built on lands belonging to the Palestinian towns and villages of Beit Jala, Beit Safafa and Wallajeh, between Bethlehem and Occupied East Jerusalem. This latest approval comes as the occupying Power also continues with its construction of its apartheid wall in the very same area.

In this regard, it has become absolutely indisputable that Israel's illegal settlement activities and the construction of its wall are intricately correlated and part and parcel of the same unlawful objective of the occupying Power to colonize Palestinian land and alter its demographic composition in order to facilitate its de facto annexation. It is also clear that the lack of accountability has fostered this

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Israeli impunity. And, for that reason, it is high time for the international community to confront Israel's colonization of Palestinian land in all of its manifestations as a matter of legal, political and moral responsibility, since such illegal actions are well known to constitute the major obstacle to the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the realization of the two-State solution.

As the occupying Power builds and expands more illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, it also continues with its illegal, repressive and punitive measures of home demolitions, leaving countless Palestinian families homeless and hopeless. In this connection, we regret to inform you that, over the past 24 hours, over 30 Palestinian families have lost their homes in Qalandiya, Ras Al-Amud and Al-Issawiya in the occupied West Bank following the destruction of their properties by the Israeli occupying forces. Needless to say, according to international humanitarian law, this systematic and institutionalized practice of home demolition by the occupying Power in occupied territory is tantamount to collective punishment — a war crime.

Moreover, it is not only Israel's illegal settlement enterprise or home demolitions that must be addressed. The occupying Power also persists with all of its other policies and measures against the defenceless Palestinian population, which are in violation of international law. This includes the killing and injuring of innocent Palestinian civilians, among them women and children, the arrest and detention of Palestinian civilians, as well as other collective measures against the occupied and unprotected Palestinian people, which include draconian restrictions on movement via the use of curfews, closures and checkpoints throughout the Occupied State of Palestine. In addition, Israel's 10-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip — a repugnant form of collective punishment amounting to a war crime and the source of countless human rights violations — has persisted, deepening the socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis among the nearly 2 million Palestinians living there.

Clearly, the destructive impact of the above-mentioned Israeli violations is immense, as reflected in rising tensions, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, and deepening anger and frustration among the Palestinian civilian population living under its nearly half-century-old occupation. Therefore, immediate action by the international community is required to avert the further destabilization of this volatile situation. To begin with, the international community, including the Security Council, must ensure that measures are taken to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all such violations and crimes and to abide by obligations under international law, or to be held fully accountable should it fail to do so. This should include responsible action by the Security Council, which is long overdue, both to ensure respect for international law and to contribute seriously to the achievement of a final, just, lasting and peaceful solution to this conflict and to salvage, if still possible, the two-State solution. The Security Council can no longer stand by, paralyzed by the lack of political will. On our part, the Palestinian leadership will continue to exert all efforts to confront the Israeli illegal colonization enterprise and all of its other illegal practices and policies committed against the Palestinian people and their land with all possible tools towards ending the occupation that began in 1967, so that the Palestinian people can finally live in freedom and dignity in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 590 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 22 July 2016 (A/ES-10/726-S/2016/642) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nadya **Rasheed**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.